

I am a Barrier

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I am a Barrier

by [MiaQc](#)

Summary

My name is Alex Barrier. I thought I was just a kid like any other until my older brother passed away and I found out I was a Rift Breaker.

- A translation of [Je suis un Barrier](#) by [MiaQc](#)

My big brother / Beginning Path (1-5)

[Year 3015.]

[On the planet Ionas.]

[In Solis' country, in Xodias' city.]

My name is Alex Barrier. I know it's a cheesy last name, but James says it's symbolic. James is my older brother. I'm 9, he's 15. He's been cranky lately. I don't understand why. However, my brother is very mysterious. For years, he seems to have led a double life. He often skips school and often comes home with tears in his clothes.

According to Mom, he wasn't like this before I was born. I always wondered if his strange behavior was due to me. Yet, when he spends time with me, he is the perfect big brother. Always kind, caring, protective... but I've never been able to get him to share his secrets. We are both blond but James' hair is darker than mine. My eyes are green, his are blue.

Today, in the Falo-Two's month, I walk in the forest with him.

[On Ionas, each year has four seasons and eight months.]

[Seasons: Sprilison, Summina, Faloraz, Wintose.]

[Months: Spril-One, Spril-Two, Summi-One, Summi-Two, Falo-One, Falo-Two, Winto-One, Winto-Two.]

[Days don't have names, so we have to say the long "Day <x> of <month>". For example, today is "Day 10 of Falo-Two." Each month has 30 days.]

Anyway, as I was saying, I'm walking through the forest with James. Since he's still grumpy, I thought he wouldn't come with me, but he reluctantly agreed. After seeing a picnic table in the distance, I ask him if we can sit down.

"I'm a little tired," I explain, "and we can eat our snacks."

I have a snack in my backpack. Cold sausages, soda and chips. My brother just says a "good" and we go sit down. We sit across from each other. I pull my snack out of my backpack. While I eat everything, James pulls out his own stuff.

A water bottle, a thermos, a bowl, a wooden spoon and several unlabeled pouches. James tears one of them open and pours a yellowish powder into the bowl. He opens his thermos, pours in some water (it looks hot) and mixes it all together. The powder turns into a kind of mush. It doesn't look very appetizing.

"What's that?" I ask my brother.

He gives me the strangest answer, "Survival." I ask him for clarification.

"Survival food." James says to me.

"What? Like in the army? Why would you eat that?" I asked him.

James doesn't answer me and he just eats the mush. I sigh. Always so mysterious.

Suddenly, I see a strange white light appear. This light turns into a huge crack. I scream as a big monster comes out of it. The crack disappears behind him.

"Alex?" Says my brother, concerned. "Alex, what's wrong?"

I yell at him to look behind him. James turns around but he doesn't see the creature. A giant brown spider with bright yellow eyes.

"Alex, I don't see... Wait. Was there a Rift?"

"A what?" I asked James.

"A Rift. A crack of white light."

"Yeah, but it's gone. Now there's just this giant spider."

"FUCKING SHIT!" Yells my brother.

He only swears when he's in trouble. He gets up and jumps over the table to be next to me. James reassures me that everything is going to be okay because I can see the monster. I don't understand what he is talking about.

"You're Active, Alex." My big brother simply says to me.

"Wha...? 'Active'?"

"You're a Rift Breaker now, like I was." Says James. "You were

wondering why I've been so cranky lately? Because I went Inactive, I lost my powers."

My eyes widen in amazement. My brother had powers?

"I can't see it, I can't fight it, but you can!" Exclaims my brother. "NOW FIGHT!"

He pushes me to go attack the giant spider. I stammer to him that I can't do that. I don't even know how!

"Don't worry, I'm here. I can guide you." James reassures me. "We, the Barrier, have always had defensive powers. As for your weapon, it might be a knife, like mine was."

"But...!" I try to tell him before he interrupts me.

"All you have to do is focus on your inner self, your soul, and materialize your weapon. Then the rest of your Rift Breaker powers will follow."

I want to tell him that I don't understand anything anymore when my big brother raises his voice.

"COME ON, Alex! Time is running out!"

The giant spider makes an angry noise. It will attack us soon. I scream that I don't understand anything and that I am afraid. Suddenly, the creature raises one of its legs in the air and hits me with it. I am knocked to the ground and it *really* hurts. James sighs.

"I can't believe this is how I'm going to end." He says in a serious, somber tone.

I want to ask him what he's talking about, while painfully getting up, when my big brother starts singing a mysterious song.

♪ O fallen friends ♪

♪ Powers no longer bends ♪

I yell my brother's name as I see that the spider is about to tear him apart with its legs.

♪ No one by my side ♪

♪ Never surrender, never be denied! ♪

My brother had time to finish singing before he was killed by the beast. I scream out a "NOOOOOOO!" in despair. While holding back my tears, I run as fast as my legs can carry me, because I refuse to die facing this thing.

Nana is an RB / Beginning Path (2-5)

When I arrive in town, I wonder what to do. Go to the police? Then tell them what, that my brother was killed by a giant spider? At the thought of my older brother's death - he's really dead! - I can't hold it in anymore. I cry my eyes out. I also scream. Passers-by look at me, but no one tries to talk to me. I kept crying. Suddenly, I hear a child's voice. A little girl's voice.

"Hey! Alex, HEY!"

I wipe my tears and see Nana running towards me. Nana is one of my classmates from Xorie's school. She is 7 years old. Her family, the Raimei, is from Sakumari. People from this country have dark hair, small black eyes, and golden shade skin.

"Is everything okay?" The little girl asks me. "Are you hurt anywhere?"

"N...No... but..."

"Whew!" Says Nana. "When I heard The Last Alan, I was so scared for you!"

"The Last Alan'?"

I force myself to stop crying. Nana seems reluctant to talk to me more. Yet she goes ahead.

"Uh... Well, before we continue, are you Active? If you're not, I can't tell you anything. That's the rule."

I tell her I'm Active.

"Good." She said to me, before explaining many things to me.

Rift Breakers - or RBs - have been around for generations, even centuries. If they know they are going to fall in battle, they sing a sacred song that any other RB can hear, no matter how far apart they are. Since the very first Rift Breaker was named Alan, this song has been named "The Last Alan". The idea behind the name is "the last song of Alan's legacy carrier". The Last Alan has several variations, depending on whether the Rift Breaker is Active, Inactive, alone or in a group.

Hesitantly, I ask Nana if she knows that my older brother is dead.

"Yes, otherwise he wouldn't have sung The Last Alan. I wish it had been under different circumstances, but my deepest condolences."

I remain silent. I don't know what else to say.

"You probably have a lot of questions now that you're Active." Said the little girl. "Come on. Let's go to my family's restaurant. I'll pay for your meal!"

I know she's trying to cheer me up, but I'm not hungry. Nana tells me we can still talk there. I tell her I'd rather go home.

"I understand. Alex, it's... it's always hard to lose... I mean, I haven't seen anyone fall in battle, but listen. The other Active Rift Breakers, besides me, are Aimé Damour and Lily Adanyi. Among the Inactives still alive are Lily's grandfather and Charlie Always, the journalist. Try to remember their names, okay?"

Then Nana says goodbye and I go home.

At Raimei / Beginning Path (3-5)

As soon as I enter the house, Mom, noticing that I have been crying, asks me if I am okay and where James is. My silence worries her. Dad tries to get me to talk, but he gets stuck on my silence. Knowing that I can't tell them anything, I have to talk but to tell them what? That James is dead, killed by a monster (truth)? That James is at a friend's house (lie)? That James is still in the forest (half-truth)?

"Well, you see..." I tell them. "James is still in the forest... and he... he's... he's dead."

"What are you saying?" Dad asks me.

"Well, we were walking together and then he fell. He didn't get up. I panicked so I went back to town."

It's not the truth, but it's not an outright lie either.

"Come on, Alex, is this a joke?" Mom asks me. "You have a very questionable sense of humor."

"No, I'm not kidding! James is dead. He's not coming back."

My father wants to send me to my room as punishment. Instead, I turn around and walk out of the house. Despite my parents' cries for me to come back, I leave and go to Nana's family restaurant. It is called "At Raimei". It's not the most original name.

As soon as I enter the restaurant, a waitress asks me if I want a table for two.

"No. I'm here to see Nana. Is she here?"

"Yes." The waitress tells me. "She's in the back with her parents."

"The back?"

"Where the kitchen is."

I ask if I can see Nana and the waitress goes to get her.

"Alex, hi!" Nana says when she sees me. "So you came after all."

"Yeah, hi."

"What happened? You look pretty down."

"With my brother's death, it's normal to feel depressed, right?"

It was obvious. Nana, realizing her mistake, apologizes. I then tell her that I talked to my parents.

"I tried to tell them that James is dead, and it went wrong. Dad wanted to send me to my room as punishment, so I left the house."

"OUCH!" Exclaims the little girl. "At the same time, I understand them. They don't know anything about the Rift Breakers, so if someone told them their oldest son died... Sorry. I don't want to bring up your sadness again."

"It's okay." I tell her. "The sadness and grief won't go away so easily. Now, what can you tell me about the Rift Breakers?"

"Lots of things, but first, let's eat something!"

No matter how many times I tell her I'm not hungry, Nana orders ramen for two. I sigh. At least Nana is paying. While I eat, Nana explains so much to me that I had to ask her to send me notes on my HoloPad later. Even though it's the 3000s, our planet doesn't have sophisticated robots, flying cars, AI as smart as the Ionasian and cyberization. On the other hand, we have holograms. HoloTV, HoloPad, HoloWatch, etc. and, as I am now discovering, an invasion of invisible monsters.

These monsters, which come out of the Rifts, have been attacking Xodias for centuries. Only the Rift Breakers, children chosen at random - but sometimes from the same family - over several generations can see and fight them. Their powers manifest between the ages of 5 and 10 and they disappear before they turn 18. They can all break Rifts with their magical weapons, hence the name "Rift Breakers", and they often have access to other powers. When a Rift Breaker gets their powers, they are Active. When they lose them, they becomes Inactive. "The Last Alan" is used when one is about to die in battle, but I already know that.

"I'll send you notes later tonight, with contact addresses for Lily, Aimé and Charlie," Nana said. "The sooner you contact them, the better."

I finished eating. I was about to say goodbye to Nana so I could go home - and face my angry parents - when she spoke to me again.

"Alex. No one can force you to fight. When a Rift Breaker becomes Active, it's up to them to decide what they wants to do. Your brother, James, has decided to fight. You, as the next Barrier, what will you do?"

Reflecting on her words, I leave the restaurant and head home.

Lily, Aimé, Charlie / Beginning Path (4-5)

When I come home, I find Mom and Dad in the living room crying.

"Mom? Dad? Why are you...?"

"You were right!" Says Mom. "James... Our James is..."

"Wait! Do you believe me now? Why?"

"While you were away, a man came to see us." Dad explains. "He said he was a reporter. He proved your brother's death."

I ask my father if this reporter's name was Charlie Always.

"I don't know. I didn't catch his name. He showed us a holographic recording in which he found James' body in the forest. It was horrible!"

"He was in pieces." Says Mom. "Who could have done that? Why!?!?"

"Uh..." I asked my parents, hesitating a bit. "Do the words 'Rift Breaker' mean anything to you?"

Dad says "no", Mom starts to say "no" and then she says her grandmother had said something like that once or twice.

"But she was at the end of her life with the old age amnesia. I thought she was delirious." Mom continues to say. "She often said she heard voices and she talked about 'monsters'."

"So she was one too, like James..."

Dad asks me what I'm talking about.

"I need... I need more time... to figure everything out." I say to my parents. "When it's done... if you're open to the idea, I... I'll explain everything."

"Alex, I don't understand..." My mom begins to say before I cut her off.

"Let's just say that our family is special. Our ancestors have secrets."

With these words, I leave my parents - stunned! - and I go to my room. There, I open my HoloPad and see that Nana has sent me two

HQMs - for Holo Quick Message - the evolution of QTM (Quick Text Message)!

< Nana > [Charlie told me he talked to your parents. I'll send you the notes as soon as I can.]

So Charlie is the man who brought the dark news.

< Nana > [Here are the contact addresses for Lily, Aimé and Charlie.]

I can now contact them via HQM or via HoloTalk.

I feel nervous, but I think talking to them would be good for me and they can teach me more about the Rift Breakers.

I start with Lily through HoloTalk. The holographic face of a nine-year-old girl with dark skin appeared in my HoloPad. Her hair is dark brown and her eyes are hazelnut color.

"Hello. Lily Adanyi. Who am I speaking to?"

Her voice has a metallic, robotic effect. This happens all the time in holographic conversations. I tell her I'm Alex Barrier.

"Barrier. James' brother? My condolences." Lily said to me in a solemn tone.

I remain silent and she continues to talk to me.

"If you contact me, you must be Active now."

"Yes. I got your address from Nana."

"Of course. She could have warned me. I just heard about James from Charlie and now... Can I help you?"

I tell Lily that just talking would be nice. I can't believe James is dead like this.

"It's always a shock to lose one of us." The dark-skinned girl tells me. "Charlie has seen a lot of RBs go down, just like my grandfather."

"Your grandfather, huh?"

"Yes, he was there when I became Active. I quickly understood my duty."

Her "duty", so Lily fights these monsters. She confirms it to me.

"Yes, of course. Nana and Aimé too. Aimé has the hardest part. He's a Soul Carrier, you see, and it's not easy."

I ask her what she means by Soul Carrier. Lily explains that most Rift Breakers have the power of Weapon Materialization and an additional power tied to that same weapon. A Soul Carrier carries the souls of fallen RBs and gains elemental powers. Aimé has 6 of them, which is a record!, and they have had a hard life.

"I know, it seems hard to believe." Said Lily. "It's a lot to take in all at once, and with James' death on top of it..."

"No. I'm fine." I reply. "If I'm going to choose what to do now, I need to understand as much as possible."

"Nana must have already told you that. No one can force you to fight."

"I know. I think I'll talk with Aimé now."

"All right. Don't hesitate to call back if you need help."

Lily's face disappears. I call Aimé via HoloTalk. The holographic face of a 10-year-old boy appears. His skin is very pale, his hair is a dull red, and his eyes are a strange blue. A brilliant blue.

"This is Aimé Damour. I am quite busy. Can you call later?"

"Sure." I answer. "My name is Alex Barrier."

"Barrier? James' bro... I'm sorry. When I heard The Last Alan, I went to the forest as fast as I could. When I got there, James was dead and the monster is in hiding. I'm going to find it and kill it. Don't worry."

His words surprise me. I can't answer him.

"What?" Aimé asks me. "Would you rather do it and avenge your brother?"

I manage to say an "I don't know". After all, I still don't know if I will fight as a Rift Breaker. The redhead boy tells me that this isn't a decision to be taken lightly and that I need to think it through. I thank Aimé.

"By the way, 'Aimé Damour', is your family originally from Croisière?" I then asked him.

"Yes, Croisière is quite the country. Their specialty is homemade bread."

"I didn't think to ask Lily what country her family is from. Do you know it?"

Aimé tells me that the Adanyi family is from Ekiopila. I then tell him that the monster that killed James is a giant spider and I ask him to "give it hell for me!"

"No worries. I'll call you when the job is done."

Aimé's face disappears. I don't regret my decision. The spider must be killed quickly. I might as well let an experienced RB handle it. All I have to do is contact Charlie. I use HoloTalk, but I don't get a response. I send him an HQM.

<Alex> [Hi Charlie. I'm Alex, James' little brother. When you're free, can we talk? Thank you]

It took a while, but he answered.

<Charlie> [Hello, Alex. I'm really sorry about your brother. I've known him for years. I'd love to chat with you, but I've been very busy lately. When I'm not working for the local HoloPaper, I'm training Active Rift Breakers.]

<Charlie> [I advise you to mourn your brother and think carefully about what you are going to do. Fight monsters as a Rift Breaker or ignore them and live a normal life?]

<Alex> [That's good advice. Thanks.]

<Charlie> [You're welcome. Maybe I'll see you at your brother's funeral. Bye.]

I spend the rest of the day in my room. Nana sent me the notes about the RBs and Aimé called me back. The giant spider died in excruciating pain. I barely speak to my parents. They are grieving and I am not ready to tell them about the Rift Breakers.

The days are flying by and I'm still going to school. I also got a HoloWebAddress from Charlie for a (secret) database he manages. It contains all known Rift Breakers, in the form of family trees. I found Mom's grandmother, a picture of James as a child and a "Charlotte Always". There is almost no information about Alan, other than the

fact that he was born in the 2000s.

Significant choice / Beginning Path (5-5)

On the 15th day of Falo-Two, James' funeral takes place. Among the guests, I see Lily, Aimé, Nana and Charlie. My parents didn't invite them, but they came anyway. Nana calls out to me, Lily says hello, Aimé greets me.

"Hi everyone. You came."

"Of course." Nana replies, "We all knew James."

"Rift Breakers should always stick together, even when death separates us." Said Charlie darkly. "I may have to sing 'The Last Alan' soon."

"CHARLIE! Don't talk nonsense!" Lily retorts. "At the day of James' funeral..."

"Forgive me, but I'm still mentally preparing for that day." Says Charlie. "Charlotte..."

"Charlotte?" I said, surprised. "I saw her in the database. Who was she? Your little sister?"

"N... No... that's who I was... but that's in the past. Now, Alex, the ceremony will begin. Don't you have a speech to make in your brother's honor?"

I say "yes". I give the speech and the funeral goes ahead. When it is all over, and my parents are about to go home with me, a scream is heard. A man collapses on the ground, covered in blood, as if he had been attacked by an invisible force.

I look around and see them. The monsters. Several bats with red eyes. I also see a Rift. Charlie rushes over to me and yells at me to step back while Lily, Aimé and Nana neutralize them. My parents, unable to see the monsters, start arguing with Charlie. I tell Mom and Dad that it's not a good time to quarrel. Lily, Aimé and Nana arrive, and they are ready to fight.

"But this man is completely nuts!" Say Dad.

"I never invited him." Mom adds.

I have to reason with them.

"BUT MOM, DAD! He's the one who told you about James' death! Why would he be nuts?"

"But... But he..." Mom begins to say.

"Whatever." Says my dad. "We're leaving! Come on, Alex."

That's it. It's time to decide. My one and only choice.

Will I fight as a Rift Breaker or will I leave with my parents, ignoring all future monsters and live a normal life?

Normal life for me / Normal Life Path

I leave with my parents, leaving the bats to Lily, Aimé and Nana.

My choice has been made. Days go by and I live a normal life. I go to school, I do my homework, I wander around town on weekends... all the while ignoring the monsters. I'm not in contact with Lily, Aimé and Charlie anymore. I still talk to Nana, but we talk about mundane things.

One day, while I was at home with my parents, a Rift appeared and many monsters came out of it. A carnivorous plant, a rat as big as a cat, a dog with tentacles, a bird with a woman's head... I couldn't ignore them, but since I don't know how to materialize my weapon and how to fight, I know I won't survive, but there is one thing I can do.

"Dad? Mom? You need to get out of the house right now!"

My dad asks me why. I yell at him.

"BECAUSE I SAY SO!!!"

They reluctantly leave the house.

"Good. Now, 'The Last Alan'."

I sigh and begin to sing.

♪ O fallen brother ♪

♪ Forgotten power ♪

♪ This is really gloomy ♪

♪ I've denied my duty! ♪

It was lame, but whatever. I hope Nana and the others get there in time to protect my parents. The monsters are tearing me apart. My life is fading away.

I am a Barrier, a Rift Breaker / Rift Breaker Path

I yell at my parents that I refuse to leave. I then tell Charlie that I'm going to fight.

"Alex, are you s—?" Charlie starts to ask me before I cut him off

"I said I'm going to fight! I'm a Barrier, a Rift Breaker, just like James was!"

I remember the words of my big brother. Focusing on my inner being, on my soul, and... There was a flash of light. A knife is now in my hands.

"Weapon Materialized!" I said, all happy. "Lily, Aimé, Nana, LET'S GO!"

We face the bats. I let out a scream while attacking one with my knife. Lily, having materialized her weapon, a silver bow, sends a piercing arrow at another bat. Nana, having a spear as a weapon, uses an electric attack. Aimé, on the other hand, calls a "Rowan" and a bat gets charred.

I ask Aimé who Rowan is.

"One of the souls I carry. He gives me the power of fire."

Another of the bats manages to hurt me. Lily reassures me that I can heal myself easily.

"James didn't have time to fully explain them to you." Adds the dark-skinned girl. "Your powers are defensive and healing. Try it."

I focus on my injury and it disappears.

"WOW! That's so cool."

Aimé continues to slaughter bats with elemental attacks. This makes Nana angry.

"HEY!" She shouts to Aimé. "I want to kill some, too!"

Aimé says a simple "sorry" and I ask him if he can tell me more about the souls he carries.

"I prefer to keep their pasts to ourselves, but there are six in total. Rowan (fire), Nilam (water). Midori (wind), Dewitt (light), Flavien (earth), Iola (darkness)."

"I see."

We continue the fight and finish off all the bats.

"Very good." Says Lily. "Where is the Rift?"

Nana yells "HERE" and she throws her spear at the Rift, breaking it.

"Now no more monsters will come." Said Aimé. "How do you feel? It's your first fight, after all."

I reply that I feel as much weird as I do good. It's hard to explain.

"So, are you *really* going to fight the monsters to come until the day your powers disappear?" The red-haired boy asks me.

"Yes. I'm determined. Mom, dad? I need to explain something to you."

That's how my parents found out about my brother's secret/double life. Even though I know they want to stop me, I'm not going to escape from my duty as an RB. After all, my choice has been made.

More days pass. On the 25th day of Falo-Two, I am at the beach with Lily, Aimé and Nana. There are jellyfish to fight. Aimé says it won't be long.

"Really?" I ask.

"Yeah, look at me! ULTIMATE ELEMENTAL RELEASE!"

An explosion of fire, wind, earth, water, light and darkness kills all the jellyfish.

"Oh my... Are you overpowered or what?"

Aimé says a "yep" while smiling. Lily then says that she would love to swim, but the water is too cold this time of year. Nana goes to break the Rift.

Later, on the fifth day of Winto-One, my class visits the museum. Nana sees a Rift, but she doesn't have time to break it before a monster, a slime, comes out. Since Aimé and Lily go to another school, we have to fight it alone.

The dark-haired girl, while she materializes her spear, tells me that she is very happy that Aimé is not there. I ask her why.

"You know, so he doesn't kill everything at once!"

"Does he do that a lot?"

"No, only when he wants to be noticed."

I say nothing more and we defeat the slime. This time, it is me who destroys the Rift.

Still later, on the first day of Spril-One, a new year (3016) begins. I am now Lily, Aimé and Nana's best friend. We are often together and other monsters are waiting for a beating from us. A red mutant plant and a blue mutant plant.

"Let's not waste time, okay?" Aimé asks.

"No, no way, no!" Retorts Nana. "Don't do your one-kill-everything attack!"

"Why not?"

"Let's kill that blue plant first, shall we?" Says Lily, wanting to avoid a squabble.

Nana eliminates it with her spear, but another blue mutant plant takes its place.

"OH COME ON!" Nana shouts angrily.

Aimé asks her if he can do his attack now. Nana sighs and says "yes". In less than a minute, both plants are eliminated. Then Aimé takes care of breaking the Rift.

Of course, there are always new Rifts to destroy, monsters to fight, but we will protect the city of Xodias until the end.

"Even if it means that 'The Last Alan' has to be used, I..." I thought aloud before my friends lectured me.

"ALEX, don't even think about it!" Lily retorts.

"I'm going to beat you to a pulp before you even start singing!" Says Nana.

"All my souls and I will stop you!" Says Aimé.

I tell them I was joking, but Nana has a hard time believing me. Charlie did try it once during a monster attack at the mall, but I stopped him in time. When I asked him why he would do such a thing, he told me that in that mall several RBs of his generation fell to a horde of zombies.

"I was so weak back then."

He never told me more. Still, I'd like to know more about his past as a Charlotte / Rift Breaker. Anyway, on a happier note, Xodias' city is in good hands.

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